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Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6606th meeting

Tuesday, 30 August 2011, 3.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri	(India)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Onowu
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Libya

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Libya

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: Let me begin with an update on the terrorist attack on United Nations House in the Nigerian capital of Abuja. We have all condemned this terrible act. As many of us have noted, it was an assault on those who have devoted their lives to helping others. This has been the second major terrorist attack on United Nations premises this year. The first, of course, was in Mazar-e-Sharif, where seven people died, including three United Nations staff.

In the Abuja incident, a total of 23 people were killed, 11 of whom were United Nations staff, including one international — a young Norwegian woman named Ingrid Midtgaard, from Oslo. More than 80 were wounded. Within minutes of the initial reports, I asked the Deputy Secretary-General, Asha-Rose Migiro, and our head of security, Under-Secretary-General Gregory Starr, to go to the scene. They returned yesterday and have briefed me.

What we know is that this attack was the work of a suicide bomber who rammed a sport utility vehicle at high speed through the exit gates of the United Nations compound. United Nations House in Abuja, home to 26 United Nations agencies and programmes, is a well-built structure with robust security measures. This attack, therefore, is cause for a serious reassessment, not just in Nigeria and not just in high-threat locations, but worldwide.

We will be undertaking a full review of the incident itself and of our security measures at United Nations House. We will also be initiating a global threat review shortly. I will share the results with the Council at the first opportunity. Meanwhile, we are doing everything possible to assist the victims and their families. That will include trauma counselling for those who might need it.

This afternoon I will report to the General Assembly, and on Thursday the Deputy Secretary-General will hold a town hall meeting in New York to discuss the tragedy. Clearly, the United Nations and our people are being targeted more and more often by terrorists worldwide. Too often, it seems, we are considered a soft target.

The security of our staff working overseas must be paramount. We must draw the lessons to be learned from Abuja. And together, we must commit the effort and resources to implement them. Our goal must be to stay, and not to leave, in difficult security conditions. We must continue to carry out our vital work and not lock ourselves behind fortresses. We must manage risk, not become risk-averse.

I would like to close by thanking His Excellency President Goodluck Jonathan and the Government of Nigeria for their assistance in the aftermath of the attack. Once again, I extend my deep sympathies and condolences to the victims and their loved ones, and I salute the courage and dedication of our United Nations team in Abuja, for whom this is such a sad and terrible blow.

Council members have seen the latest reports from Libya. I think we can all be encouraged by the current trends. Yesterday, we received confirmation that members of Muammar Al-Qadhafi's family have sought asylum in Algeria. The National Transitional Council appears to be largely in control of Tripoli and other cities. Fighting continues in some parts of the country, most notably in Sirte, Sabha, Zuwarah and points south. Yet I think that we may now hope for a quick conclusion to the conflict and an end to the suffering of Libya's people.

Over the past week, I have spoken on several occasions with the Chairman of the National Transitional Council, Mr. Mustafa Abdel Jalil, and with many other world leaders. We discussed the United Nations role in Libya in the months ahead, including such areas as election assistance, transitional justice and policing, as well as urgent humanitarian needs.

We will continue these discussions in Paris on Thursday at the summit-level meeting of the Libya Support Group. My Special Adviser on post-conflict planning for Libya, Mr. Ian Martin, and my Special Envoy for Libya, Mr. Abdel-Elah Al-Khatib, will accompany me, along with the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe.

Meanwhile, on Friday 26 August, I held a video teleconference meeting with the heads of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union and the European Union. All agreed that, at this critical moment, the international community must come together with an effective, well-coordinated programme of action. All agreed, as well, that the United Nations should lead that effort.

Following that meeting, the Council of the League of Arab States held an extraordinary ministerial session in Cairo on 27 August. I understand that there, the League of Arab States agreed that the National Transitional Council should fill the seat of Libya in meetings of the League of Arab States. The meeting also called on the United Nations to allow the National Transitional Council to do the same at the United Nations itself.

Also, on 26 August, the Deputy Secretary-General participated at the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa. There, too, African leaders stressed the need for national reconciliation and underscored the AU's commitment to working with all Libyan stakeholders to stabilize the country.

We must act quickly and decisively to meet the considerable challenges ahead. The humanitarian situation in Libya demands urgent action. We are beginning to see signs of progress. According to some reports, large caches of medical supplies and food were discovered over the weekend by the transitional authorities, apparently stockpiled by the former regime. Hospitals are reopening. The World Food Programme has sent in a large humanitarian convoy from Tunisia, carrying water, medical supplies and blood donated by the Government of Tunisia. The World Health Organization is sending 45 tons of medical supplies as part of that same effort.

Tripoli's seaport is now open and functioning — an essential step forward in getting international relief supplies and workers into the country. However, water supplies are critically short. According to our latest reports, an estimated 60 per cent of Tripoli's population is without water and sanitation. UNICEF engineers are working to repair the pumping stations that conduct water from the Great Man-Made River to the capital and other areas, but we do not know how long it will take to restore service. Clearly, ongoing security concerns make the situation precarious at best.

It is essential that sufficient fuel and spare parts be available if we are to avoid further shut-downs of the water system. Meanwhile, we are working urgently to mobilize other resources for the delivery of water, including tanker trucks. In the coming days, we will likely request urgent international assistance in that matter.

It was vitally important that the Sanctions Committee acted to release $1.5 billion in frozen Libyan assets for humanitarian assistance. The first allocation of these assets — $110 million — has just been made. Further action will be needed in the coming days. I appeal to the Council to continue to be responsive to the requests of the transitional authorities for funding.

Also on the humanitarian front, let me note that the International Organization for Migration successfully evacuated approximately 1,000 migrants and third-country nationals from Tripoli on 28 August.

Lastly, with regard to human rights, during recent days we have seen growing evidence of summary executions, torture and human rights violations. They will be looked into by the International Commission of Inquiry for Libya, which is expected to submit its first oral update to the Human Rights Council on 19 September.

I cannot overstate the urgency of this moment. Time is of the essence. The people of Libya are looking to the international community for help. The transitional Government will outline specific requests in the coming days.

My aim is to get United Nations personnel on the ground as quickly as possible, under a robust Security Council mandate. My Special Adviser, Mr. Ian Martin, has been consulting daily with the National Transitional Council and other Libyan stakeholders, as have I and other senior members of our team. In our response, the United Nations will operate under three fundamental principles.

The first principle is national ownership. Libya's future is for Libyans to decide. We will act in accordance with their needs and desires, not vice versa.

The second principle is rapid response and delivery. Mr. Martin and his team have been engaged in a preparatory process to enable the United Nations to respond swiftly to the requests of the Libyan authorities. It appears from our consultations with the

National Transitional Council that such requests will focus mainly on five areas: restoring public security and order and promoting the rule of law; leading inclusive political dialogue, promoting national reconciliation and determining the constitution-making and electoral process; extending State authority, including by strengthening emerging accountable institutions and the restoration of public services; protecting human rights, particularly of vulnerable groups, and supporting transitional justice; and taking immediate steps to initiate economic recovery.

Our third principle is effective coordination. Our most important job will be to ensure that multilateral, regional and bilateral efforts are complementary and correspond to Libyan wishes. In turn, that will require Libya's transitional authorities to provide clear short- and longer-term priorities. Our teams on the ground will work closely with the country's leadership to ensure that confusion and duplication of effort are kept to a minimum and that time and financial resources are not wasted.

We are all acutely conscious of the magnitude of the challenge in Libya and of the enormous opportunity to help the Libyan people to build a more democratic, prosperous and stable future. In coming to their assistance, we must speak and act as one. In our response to the post-conflict challenge, we must be proactive and effective. Yet, at the same time, we must be sensitive to the complex needs and desires of the Libyan people themselves.

As I said earlier, the future of Libya must be led and owned by the Libyan people themselves. Their needs and priorities for national unity, reconciliation and inclusiveness will be the foundation of our efforts in the days and months to come.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.